



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

Fugitive responsible for high-profile murders in Brazil arrested in Boston

-- Brazilian suspect assassinated key trade union leader in the Amazon in 1991 --

BOSTON, MA — A cooperative effort between U.S. and Brazilian authorities has resulted in the arrest of an international fugitive near Boston who has been convicted of two murders in Brazil, including the killing of an Amazon labor leader, and is charged with a third murder.



Last week, special agents from the Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Document and Benefit Task Force and the State Department's Bureau of Diplomatic Security arrested Jose Serafim Sales, a.k.a. "Barrerito" in the Boston area.

"We will not allow the United States to be a safe haven for murderers and human rights violators," said Matthew J. Etre, acting Special Agent-in-Charge for ICE in Boston. The United States has begun the process to return Sales to Brazil to face justice.

Barrerito was the triggerman in the 1991 assassination of a high-profile union leader in the Amazon. On February 2, 1991, Expedito Ribeiro de Souza, the President of the Union of Rural Workers of Rio Maria, was shot twice in the head and once in the back by "Barrerito" as he left union headquarters in Rio Maria, a city in Brazil's northern state of Para. The assassination prompted outrage in Brazil and the international community.

Sales was subsequently convicted of the murder and, in 1995, was sentenced to 25 years in prison by a court in Belem, a port city on the Amazon River. Sales later escaped from prison in March 2000. In June 2000, a local Amazon rancher was convicted of ordering the assassination of the union leader that Barrerito carried out.

In addition to the murder of the trade union president, Sales has been convicted of another murder in the Rio Maria area and is charged with a third homicide in Brazil.

Last Tuesday, U.S. federal agents located Sales in Boston and arrested him without incident. Fingerprints provided by the Brazilian Federal Police matched those taken from the suspect arrested in Boston.

“The arrest of international murder fugitive Jose Serafim Sales was the result of a joint effort by ICE, the State Department and Brazilian authorities,” According to Etre. The Brazilian Federal Police and ICE (U.S. law enforcement) share information on suspected fugitives and criminals on a routine basis.

ICE

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of four integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities.